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SIX UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF WASHINGTON.

COMPARATIVELY little of Washington's correspondence with his family has survived the century of the nation's independence. Letters to his brother Samuel are particularly rare—not one of them being included in Sparks' collection of Washington's Writings. The Samuel Washington to whom the six letters herewith published are addressed, was a younger brother of the first President. He was born November 16, 1734, and died in 1781. He was five times married, and the Thornton Washington,* referred to, was his son by his second wife.

These letters appear now, for the first time, in print. They are valuable not only on account of the historical facts narrated in them, but also because they afford an insight into the private affairs of Washington. They were furnished to THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW by Colonel T. A. Washington, the great-grandson of Colonel Samuel Washington.

I.

MORRISTOWN, Mar. 15th, 1777.

DEAR BROTHER, The Gentlemen returning from Camp will, I expect, be so overburthened with news, that you will not know the want of it for a month to come.—To them, therefore, I refer you, with this assurance of mine, as an opinion, that Gen' Howe will move towards Philadelphia the moment the Roads become passable for his Artillery and Baggage.—

I got Thornton Inoculated on Wednesday Week.—he has had the eruptive Fever and is in a very fair way of having the disorder slightly.—after this I shall give him an Ensigny in a new Regiment I shall give Col. Thruston the raising of, by which he will still continue under the immediate care of that Gentleman.—

I wish it had been in my power to have paid greater regard to y^r recommendation of Captⁿ Cooke and others than it was—This Comp^y was at a distance from me, and immersed as I am in business, the attention is naturally

* Thornton Washington was born in 1760, and was therefore at this time about sixteen or seventeen years old.

taken up with objects of such quick succession that one can hardly advert to those matters that do not immediately strike you.—and besides, I have ever been cautious of showing more civility to my own Countrymen than others to avoid the charge of partiality.—I do not doubt but they, without attending to my situation, or considering my motives, have blamed me for neglect; but upon mature reflection I am persuaded I shall stand acquitted by them.

The request you make with respect to my Picture, I should have no difficulty in complying with, if it were practicable to gratify you, but, at present, two insurmountable obstacles offer themselves—the want of a Painter—and if a Painter could be brought hither—the want of time to sit.—If ever you get a picture of mine taken from life, it must be when I am removed from the busy scenes of a Camp & ought to be at a time when the mind is not bent down with care.—

My best affections are rendered to my Sister & the little ones & with every sentiment of regard & love I am Y^r,

G: WASHINGTON.

For Col^l Sam^l Washington
In Berkeley County *
Virginia.

II.

MORRISTOWN, April 5th, 1777

DEAR BROTHER, Thornton returns to you well recovered of the Small Pox, as I hope to hear that my Sister and the rest of the family are. — I heartily congratulate you on the favorable manner in which you had it yourself.—

To save Thornton or you the expense of buying a Horse to ride home on I have lent him a mare of mine which I beg of you to have sent by any safe conveyance which may offer to Lund Washington at Mount Vernon. — If she should be in want of a Horse before any opportunity offers of sending her down please to put her to some good (but not expensive) one, altho she is not very valuable herself. — When you send her down let Lund Washington know whether you have put her to horse or not & what horse.—

To my very great surprise General Howe has made no capital movement yet—a few days ago a detachment of his army (consisting of about 600 men) run up the North River in Transports and destroyed some Rum, and other stores of that kind belonging to us at a place called Peekskill, where the Post happened to be weak—but upon the assembling of some of our men they embarked in great haste and went back again to New York.—They are also Imbarking men (to the amount it is said of 3,000) for some expedition,† but the destination is unknown.—My conjecture is Philadelphia, as we know they have been endeavouring to get Pilots well acquainted with the Navigation of the Delaware.—An agent of theirs detected in this business got exalted up a Gallows at Philadelphia the other day.—

Our Troops come in exceedingly slow—whether owing to an unwillingness

* Berkeley County is now Jefferson County, West Virginia.

† This was the expedition to Connecticut under Tryon.

in the men to enlist or to the Idleness and dissipation of the Officers, and their reluctance to leave their friends and acquaintances, I shall not undertake to say: but it looks to me as if we should never get an army assembled.—M^r. Thruston to whom I have given the raising of the Sixteenth Regiment will give Thornton a Commission in it.—

My best wishes attend my Sister and the little ones whom I hope I may congratulate on their perfect recovery.—In this Mrs. Washington, who is with me, sincerely joins.

I am with every sentiment of regard and love, D^r Sir,

Y^r most affect Brother

G: WASHINGTON.

P. S.

M^r Johnston has lent Thornton a Saddle and Bridle and I suppose has told him what is to be done with it.—

Since writing the above I have determined to send by Thornton 2000 Dollars to Lieutenant M^cDonald, who I intend (if he will accept it) for Col^o. Thruston's Lieut^o Col^o.—Let Thornton, if you cannot conveniently see M^cDonald yourself, carry the money to him immediately (a receipt to be taken for it.) Thornton will receive his Recruiting orders from M^cDonald who will appoint a place for him to send his Recruits to in order to be forwarded on to the Army or disciplined.

G^o: W.

III.

PHILA COUNTY, Oct. 27th 77.

DEAR BROTHER, Your letter by my nephew, Thornton, begun on the 20th of last m^o and ended the 22^d came safe to my hands.—I am very glad Col^o Lewis purchased a Lott or two for me at the warm Springs as it was always my Intention to become a Proprietor there if a Town should be laid off at that place.—Two Lotts is not more that I wished to possess, but if he is altogether disappointed, and cannot be otherwise supplied, I will, under those circumstances, part with one of mine—of this you will inform him; and I shall not only depend upon, but thank and pay you cheerfully for the Improvements which are necessarily erected for the saving of the Lotts.—As I do not know what sort of Buildings the Act of Assembly requires to save the Lotts, I can give no directions about them; but if I hold both Lotts, which I would rather do, I would reserve the least spott for a tolerable convenient dwelling House to be built hereafter.—and, if a House which may (hereafter) serve for a kitchen, together with a stable would be sufficient to save the Lotts they might be so placed as to appear uniform & clever, which when the whole are finished, and in that case, content myself with building for the present no more than the kitchen and Stable.—

I shall take an opportunity of speaking to Gen^l Woodford (who is just returned to Camp) on that part of your letter which relates to Thornton, and if any thing can be done for him here, without going out of the common line (which I know you would not wish me to do and thereby incur censure) I shall cheerfully do it.—

To recite at this time the circumstances of the Engagement at Brandywine,

which have been bandied about in all the Newspapers, would be totally unnecessary—almost equally so would it be to say anything at this time of the subsequent Engagement of the 4th Ins^{ts} which had every appearance (after a contest of two hours and 40 minutes) of deciding in our favor, till something, until this moment unaccounted for, determined it otherwise.—The glorious and fortunate surrender of Gen^l Burgoyne's whole Army you have doubtless heard of. As an additional piece of good news, I can inform you that on the 22^d Inst^t a body of 1200 Hessians undertook to storm one of the Forts (called Mercer at Redbank) erected for the defense of the Cheveaux de frize in the Delaware, in which they were repulsed & retreated precipitately, after leaving upward of 200 men dead & badly wounded on the spot, together with Count Donop their chief and several other valuable Officers.—their total loss in killed and wounded, on this occasion, does, by the best acc^t we can get, amount to between four and five hundred men.—the next morning, the Enemy's Ships that had passed the lower cheveaux de frize together with their Batteries on the Pennsylvania side (Fort Mercer being on the Jersey shore) began a most furious cannonade on Fort Mifflin which is placed on a small Island in the River nearly opposite to Fort Mercer, and on our little Fleet which was posted for the defense of the Cheveaux de frize, and after an incessant and most tremendous fire of six hours, retreated with the loss of a 64 Gun Ship and a frigate both of which were burnt.—Our loss on both these occasions was trifling. at Fort Mercer in killed and wounded between 30 and 40 men, at Fort Mifflin and on board the *Salleir* much less.—Since then the enemy have been pretty quiet; but using every means to make themselves masters of the River.—

The situation of the two Armies is shortly this:—The Enemy are in Phil^a—& we hovering round them to destroy & retard their operations as much as possible.—A letter is too uncertain a conveyance for me to say anything of the governing principles of our own.—Gen^l Sir Henry Clinton's expedition at the North River will if it has not already done so, end (if not in smoke) in burning and destroying of mills, gentlemen's Seats, and the villages adjacent to the River—strong evidence of their diabolical designs and despair!

Remember me kindly to M^r Warner Washington and Family and to other enquiring friends.—& be assured that I am with every sentiment of Brotherly love

Y^r Affect

G^o: WASHINGTON

P. S. I enclose you a list of the Prisoners and Artillery taken in the Northern Department this Campaign—where at least 12000 militia had assembled in aid of the Continental Troops and stopped the only Road by which Burgoyne could retreat whilst this government which alone could afford that number, with difficulty could get out any.—and left me to struggle on as well as I could with Continental Troops—for before a second set of Militia could be got, the first were always gone by which means we could never collect a respectable body at once

Y^r &c

G. W.

For, Col^l SAM^l WASHINGTON
In—Berkely County. Virginia.

IV.

FREDERICKSBURG IN THE STATE OF
NEW YORK—*Oct* 22^d 1778

DEAR BROTHER, This will be delivered to you, I expect, by Col^o Thruston; from whom you will be able to receive a more circumstantial acc^t of the situation of affairs in this Quarter than can be conveyed well in a letter.

We have been kept in an anxious state of suspense respecting the designs of the enemy; nor are we able at this time, to form any precise Ideas and judgement of their immediate determinations.—A considerable detachment of their Land Forces, and all their heavy ships sailed from New York on the 20th Inst—whither bound is not certain; but I believe to the West Indies as their affairs in that Quarter begin to put on a gloomy aspect.—The taking of Dominica by the French opens quite a new field: and if the Spanish take a part, I think G. B. will have abundant cause to repent her undertaking to subjugate this great Continent to a state of vassalage.

Not less, I think, than six or seven thousand men have been detached from the City; but what they mean to do with the rest is uncertain—many circumstances lead to a belief that they are about to evacuate it, whilst others tend more to prove that they intend to leave a Garrison there & at Newport.—A short time must, I should think, unfold their Plans.—

The Commissioners have made their dying speech in the shape & form of a manifesto & Proclamation.—I think this is an implied threat; which I have no doubt they will, if they can, & not restrained by motives of policy, execute.—Sure I am that motives of humanity will have no influence on their conduct.—I enclose you one of their Proclamations, tho it is probable you will have seen it before.—

General Woodford left this yesterday for Virginia for the purpose of having Colonel Thruston's Estate divided.—I shall only add my compliments to our friends at Fairfield & others who may enquire after

D^r Sir
Y^r Most affect^d Brother
G^d: WASHINGTON

For Col^o SAM^l WASHINGTON
In Berkeley County
Virginia.

V.

CAMP NEAR FORT LEE
Aug^t 31st 1780.

DEAR BROTHER, Your letter of the 31st Ult. came to my hands by the last Post, from Philadelphia—It gave me much concern to find by it that you are in such bad health.—I hope, this, if it should arrive safe, will find you much amended.—

It is a considerable time since I wrote to you.—in truth it is rare for me to put pen to paper for private correspondence, so much is my time and attention engrossed by public business.—I wish I could say as profitably as might be, but the fatal system of policy wh.^h we have adopted, & for ought I see to the contrary, are determined to persist in, prevents this.—

We are always without an army or have a raw and undisciplined one, engaged for so short a time, that we are not fit either for purposes of offence or

defence, much less is it in our power to project schemes & execute plans which depend upon well disciplined and permanent Troops.—One half the year is spent in getting Troops into the Field—the other half is lost in discharging them from their limited service & the manner & time in which they come and go—the public in the mean while incurring an immense expense in paying two setts—that is the comers and goers—At the same instant—In the waste of Provender, Stores, Arms, and a thousand things which can scarce be enumerated.—In a word, short enlistments has been the primary cause of the continuance of the war & every evil which has been experienced in the course of it—It has been the source from whence the depreciation of our money has flowed and though it is the cause of our present embarrassment, I much question whether our eyes are yet opened; and whether the fatal policy which heretofore has governed all our measures will not direct us to another short enlistment when the present forces leave us.—

It is impossible for any person at a distance to have an idea of my embarrassments, or to conceive how an army can be kept together under such circumstances as ours is—half its time without Provisions, Clothing or pay.—

The flattering prospect which seemed to be opened to our view in the Month of May is vanishing like the morning Dew—The States instead of sending the full number of men required of them by the first of July & the consequent supplies, have not furnished one half of them yet.—& the second division of French Troops & their ships not being arrived nor any certainty when they will, I despair of doing anything in this quarter this campaign—and what may be the consequence if the combined arms of France & Spain are not more prosperous in Europe or the West Indies, I shall leave to others to predict.—At best, the Troops we have, are only fed from hand to mouth.—and for the last four or five days have been without meat.—In short the limits of a letter would convey very inadequate ideas of our disagreeable situation; & the wretched manner in which our business is being conducted.—I shall not attempt it therefore, but leave it to some future Pen, and a more favorable period for truth to shine.

The first division of French Troops (as no doubt you have heard) are at Rhode Island—where their Squadron is blocked up the British fleet under Arbuthnot of superior force.—The Army under my command is encamped on the West bank of North or Hudson River, and about fifteen miles from the City of New York & within full view of the enemy—the river only between us.—We lately made a Forage opposite to the City & expected to be opposed in it but were not.—

I sincerely wish you a perfect restoration of health, & the enjoyment of every blessing of life.—My best regards attend my Sister (with whom I should be happy in a better acquaintance) and all your family—& with the greatest truth,

I remain Y^r affec^d

B^r

G^o: WASHINGTON

Have you ever
taken the necessary
steps to save my Lotts
at the Warm Springs?

VI.

HEIGHTS OF HARLEM, 5th Oct. 1776.

DEAR BROTHER, Altho the multiplicity of Ingagements which employ all my waking hours, will not allow me to correspond with my Friends with that freedom and punctuality I could wish, they may nevertheless be assured that neither time—distance—or change of circumstances have, in the smallest degree, altered the affection I have ever entertained for them.—

Your favor of the 16th of last month came safe to hand by Captⁿ Sheperd, and gave me the pleasure of hearing that yourself and family were well.—The acct given you by Doct. Walker, of the unfriendly disposition of the Western Indians is really alarming ; but if your success against the Cherokees is equal to report, I am in hopes it will bring the Western gentry to their second thoughts before they strike.—Your account of the want of arms among y^e People of y^e Frontier is also alarming ; but I hope the deficiency will, by one means or another, soon be repaired.—Poor Stephenson ! I sincerely lament his loss, he was a brave and a good officer.—

M^r Pendleton obtained my Deed, or a Bond, or something obligatory upon me, and my heirs, to make him a title to the Land he had of me, & sold to you, upon the purchase money being paid ; not one farthing of which has been done—even the last years Rent, if I remember right, which he took upon himself to pay, is yet behind.—However, so soon as I can get evidences I will send a power of attorney to Lund Washington, to make a legal conveyance of the land to you.—In the mean time the Instrument of writing I passed to M^r Pendleton will always be good against my Heirs, upon the condition of being complied with.—

Matters in this Quarter, have by no means worn that favorable aspect you have been taught to believe from the publications in the Gazettes—The pompous acc^t of the marches and countermarches of the militia, tho true so far as relates to the expense, is false with respect to service, for you could neither get them to stay in Camp or fight when they were there.—In short it may truly be said, they were eternally coming and going, without rendering the least earthly service, altho the expense of them surpasses all description.—

At no one time since General Howe's arrival at Staten Island* has my Force been equal (in men fit for duty) to his; and yet people, at a distance, as I have understood by letters, have conceived that they were scarce a mouthful for us.—To this cause—the number of Posts we were obliged to occupy in order to secure our communications with the Country—& the intended mode of attack, is to be attributed our Retreat from Long Island and the evacuation of New York.—

We found that General Howe had no Intention to make an attack upon our lines at the last mentioned place.—*We discovered at the same time by their movements and our Intelligence, that with y^e assistance of their ships they intended to draw a Line round us, and cut off all communication between the City and Country ; thereby reducing us to the necessity of fighting our way

* Parson's and Fellows' brigades.

out under every disadvantage—surrendering at discretion—or starving.—That they might have accomplished one or the other of these, if we had stayed at New York, is certain ; because the City, as I presume you know, stands upon the point of a narrow neck of Land laying between the East & North Rivers & not more than a mile wide for six or seven miles back ; both Rivers having sufficient depth of water for ships of any burthen ; and because they were not only superior in numbers but could bring their whole force to any one point, whereas we, to keep open the communication were obliged to have an extended Line or rather a chain of Posts, for 18 miles.

It may be asked how we came to take possession of, and continue so long in a place thus circumstanced.—To the first I answer, that the Post was taken and the works advanced, before I left Boston—& to the second that if our strength had been equal to the determination of Congress we should have had men enough to defend the City & secured the communication if their behaviour had been good.—

Our retreat from Long Island was made without any loss—so might it have been from New York, but for a defect in the department of the Quarter Master Genl^r not providing Teams enough ; and for the dastardly behaviour of part of our Troops, two Brigades of which ran away from a small party of the enemy, and left me in the Field with only my Aid de Camps.—The day after our Retreat from New York (which happened on the 15th Ult^o) we had a pretty smart skirmish with the Enemy, in which about 60 of our men were killed and wounded, and by the smallest 100, and by most other acct^s, two hundred of the Enemy.—In this engagement poor Maj^r Leitch of Weedon's Regiment received three wounds through his side, of which he died on Wednesday last, after we had thought him almost well.—Since that nothing extraordinary has happened, tho an attack from the Enemy has been & now is, daily expected —We are strengthening our Post as the Enemy are also theirs.—

My love to & best wishes attends my Sister & the Family as also our Friends at Fairfield—to these please add my compliments to M^r Booth & all other Friends, be assured that with the sincerest love and regard, I am D^r Sir

Y^r most Affec. Bro.

G. WASHINGTON

Col. Sam^r Washington }
In Berkely Co. Virginia }